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BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER  
NSC FOR JMELINE, TSHORTLEY  
COMMERCE FOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SUDAN CENSUS: GOOD PROGRESS

¶1. (U) Summary: In a meeting on February 6, 2006, the deputy director of the Sudan UNFPA office provided an update of the progress on the national census. The census is mandated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and will be the first full, participatory census in Sudan since 1956. Plans are for enumeration to be carried out November 2007, with results derived by January 2008. This is based on the assumption that access to Darfur and mined areas of the south will be feasible. Completion of census on this schedule will allow elections within the timeframe laid out in the CPA. The assistance being provided by U.S. Bureau of the Census team was highly praised by UNFPA. End Summary.

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Census a Prelude to Elections  
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¶2. (U) Poloff met with Hassan Mohtashami, Deputy Director of the Sudan UNFPA office, on February 6. UNFPA has the responsibility for coordination of the national census, which is mandated under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The census results will be used in the preparations for the national elections to be held by ¶2009. Mohtashami noted that under the terms of the CPA, the census was to be completed by July 2007 (two years after the establishment of the Government of National Unity). However, the UN had suggested that the actual enumeration be scheduled for November 2007 for technical reasons, including timing to coincide with the dry season, and all parties agreed to this change.

¶3. (U) Mohtashami said the census is budgeted to cost \$74 million, of which \$34 million is to come from the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). Progress is being made on finalizing the MDTF contribution in the next few weeks. The remainder, approximately 55 per cent of the total, is to be provided by the Sudanese government. Mohtashami

expressed some concern that the Sudanese government has, thus far, only allocated \$4 million of the \$11.5 million required for 2006.

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Good Cooperation  
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¶4. (U) Mohtashami described the various levels of coordination that the UNFPA has engaged in for the census. The international coordination of donors has gone well, with the U.S., France, and Norway all providing significant contributions. However, the deputy director has been especially pleased with the North/South coordination and cooperation that has evolved in the last few months. In the north of Sudan, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) will conduct the census, while in the south, the South Sudan Center for Census Statistics and Evaluation is the responsible agency. Mohtashami claimed that the relationship that has been established between these two offices is the best example of successful North/South cooperation between government agencies to date.

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Access a Potential Problem  
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¶5. (U) Potential problems exist with access to Darfur and the mined areas in the south. However, Mohtashami was confident that solutions could be found. As one possible scenario, he speculated that, even if the Darfur region is still unstable in November 2007, if all parties would agree to a two-week ceasefire, the enumeration could be

carried out. The mined areas in the south are relatively small, and, the deputy director noted, even if small areas of the country are missed, the census would still be accepted as valid.

¶6. (U) A pilot project is planned in November 2006 in order to allow testing of equipment and training of personnel. According to Mohtashima, the intention is to use a Norwegian scanning system to input data from the collection forms into the computer system. He is confident that the scanning system can work in Sudan despite the dust and environmental challenges. An advantage of scanning is that it provides a better quality of data collection over keyboard entry. A major advantage is that scanning will allow the results of the census to be produced in about two months, by January ¶2008. The plan is to produce a single, final census result, rather than preliminary results followed months later by a final result.

¶7. (U) Mohtashima said that his preference is not to collect information on tribal identity or religion as part of the census. He believes the census should be kept as simple as possible and that including questions of religion and ethnic group could complicate or delay the process. He cited the experience of countries such as Lebanon and Nigeria, where such questions had halted census work. As an alternative, surveys on religion and tribe could be conducted separately from the census.

¶8. (U) The work of the U.S. Bureau of Census team that is assisting in Sudan came in for high praise from Mohtashima. He expressed appreciation for the quality of the work produced and the cooperative relationships that have been developed.

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